United Nations A/72/605

General Assembly

Distr.: General
22 November 2017

Original: English

Seventy-second session
Agenda item 8
General debate

Letter dated 21 November 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

I am writing to you regarding the letter dated 2 October 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly (A/72/520).

It is notable that there is nothing new in the line of argumentation put forward to justify the denial of the Armenian Genocide by Turkey. Having failed to either substantiate its groundless claims or invent new ones, the Turkish side continues to rely on long-recycled allegations that have been addressed by Armenia on numerous occasions. To put the record straight, I would like to refer to two articles on this issue by Edward Nalbandian, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia (cited in the footnotes to this letter).

In particular, in an article published in the French newspaper *Le Figaro* on 6 September 2014,[1] Mr. Nalbandian noted the following:

> "In international relations there are, unfortunately, cases of missed opportunities. The statement of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, followed by the comments of other Turkish senior officials on the eve and after the commemoration of the 99th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide are such cases. The fabricated notions of 'common pain', 'just memory' and the appeal to the Turks and Armenians to 'follow Erdogan's lead' are misleading. Ahmet Davutoglu declares 'that the main goal of Erdogan's statement is prevention of worldwide efforts of the Genocide recognition'. Instead of concrete steps towards reconciliation one can find calls to complicity. I mean complicity against the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide.
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> "It is hard to find a nation nostalgic towards its centuries-old suppression in its ancestral homeland. Any oppressed nation cannot share the nostalgia towards the Ottoman Empire. Like other empires, the Ottoman Empire was built upon

[1] Available at www.lefigaro.fr/vox/monde/2014/09/06/31002-20140906ARTFIG00010-genocide-des-armeniens-erdogan-doit-dire-la-verite.php. The text reproduced in the present letter is available at www.mfa.am/en/interviews/item/2014/09/06/figaro_nalbandian/.

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and forcefully sustained through suppression of the basic rights and freedoms of many of its citizens.

"Mr. Davutoglu's differentiation of the Western and Turkish perception of sufferings by Christians and Muslims is astonishing. The Armenian Genocide is not only part of Armenian or western memory and history, but also of the memory of the Muslim world. One of the earliest references to the Armenian Genocide belongs to Muslim witness Fayez El Ghossein, who in 1916 published his work entitled 'The Massacres in Armenia'. Sharif and Emir of Mecca Husayn ibn Ali was one of the prominent Islamic leaders, who acted against the program of physical annihilation of the Armenians and called on his subjects to defend Armenians as they would defend themselves and their children. In 1919–1921 the large-scale extermination of Armenians were referred such Turkish public figures as Refi Cevat, Ahmet Refik Altinay. Many Muslim historians refer to the massacres of Armenians as genocide, while Arab historian Moussa Prince used the term 'Armenocide', considering it as 'the most genocidal genocide'.

"For the sake of 'just memory' artificial political actions and calls are not needed, while those, who dare express their opinion freely are killed like Hrant Dink, or exiled like Orhan Pamuk, or taken into custody, like Ragıp Zarakolu.

"Davutoglu is playing the same old tune of founding a commission of historians 'in order to find the truth'. One of the most competent international institutions on genocide studies, the International Association of Genocide Scholars, in answer to the same proposal, made an appeal to the Turkish government to accept what had been proven long ago. Instead of repeating decade-old re-worded or rephrased appeals we need genuine and concrete steps. Ratification of the Zurich Protocols, normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations, opening of the borders could pave the way to the difficult path of reconciliation between our peoples. The sub-commission on historical dimension, as envisaged by those Protocols, could implement a dialogue with the aim to restore mutual confidence between the two nations. It would be impossible to do by putting under question the reality of the Armenian Genocide.

"Led by an apparent desire to deny the fact of the genocide, as defined by the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, Erdogan's message yet again underlined that what happened in 1915 'was regardless of religion or ethnic origin'. It seems that the 1919 Turkish Military Tribunal's Indictment, which proved by undeniable facts that the deportations and large-scale massacres of the Armenians were a state policy, and sentenced its main masterminds to death, has been forgotten in Ankara. It seems that Rafael Lemkin's development of the concept of 'genocide' has gone unnoticed in Ankara. I have to remind that 99 years ago on May 24, 1915 Russia, France and Great Britain issued a special declaration by which they warned the perpetrators of the atrocities against the Armenian people of their personal responsibility for 'these new crimes of Turkey against humanity and civilization'. It is beyond any doubt that the Armenian Genocide was organized with genocidal intent. Meanwhile an attempt is made by the Turkish officials to equate the losses of the war and the systematic annihilation of Armenians, as a result of which millions of my predecessors lost their lives, homes, lands, properties. There was an attempt to strip millions of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire of their right to life, as well as their past — more than 2000 cultural and religious monuments were destroyed and the survivors were driven off the lands they had inhabited for many centuries, before Turks came to this region. In 1915 one of the chief masterminds of the Armenian

Genocide, then Interior Minister Mehmed Talaat Pasha confessed to Germany's Consul General that 'there is no Armenian question, because there are no more Armenians.' He was wrong, but the nature, magnitude and the consequences of that horrible crime are far beyond the definition of 'suffering'.

"In one of the interviews Erdogan rhetorically asked 'if such a Genocide occurred would there have been any Armenians living in this country?' Today a large number of Jews live in Germany, but no one would dare put under question the reality of the Holocaust. Or, how can one speak of 'relocation' when 1.5 million of people died or were killed? Planned marching people to the desert, starving them to death, killing most of them en route is not a relocation, it is a 'death march', it is a genocide.

"The denial of the genocide, the atmosphere of impunity paved the way for the repetition of new crimes against humanity. Genocide denial is considered by scholars as the last phase of the crime of genocide. Even though there are still few who continue to deny, but this does not mean that there is a 'dispute' about it. On the one hand, there is the fact of genocide that nobody doubts in the world, the pain of which every single Armenian family anywhere in the world bears until now, and on the other hand, there is an official and imposed denial of the genocide by the Turkish government. Turkey is in dispute with itself.

"Is it possible to make the descendants of genocide survivors, spread all over the world, a part of the complicity of genocide denial? Is it possible to equate perpetrators and victims of genocide by such clichés as 'common pain'? It is appalling to imagine that the perpetrators of Holocaust, of genocides in Cambodia, in Rwanda, and other crimes against humanity, can be equated with the victims. Is it even possible to consider genocide survivors' descendants as 'Turkish diaspora', which some Turkish politicians are trying to do today?

"As Rwanda Genocide survivor Esther Mujawayo recently mentioned at the UN Human Rights Council High Level Panel Discussion in Geneva dedicated to the Genocide Prevention Convention, 'Today is the fourth generation of Armenians who are still waiting'. Not only Armenians, the whole international community for almost 100 years has been waiting for Turkey to recognize the Armenian Genocide. The genuineness of the desire for reconciliation must be proven through recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide. The Turkish government must not refrain from genuine reconciliation. Thousands of Turkish citizens have opted for that path already.

"Davutoglu mentions Armenian composer Komitas as an example of Armenians' creative activities in the Ottoman Empire. 'Just memory' should have shed some light on the life of Komitas, who was a witness of the Genocide. He had seen all the sufferings, the horror that befell the Armenians and said that 'nobody knows all the wounds of our tragedy ... this distress will drive us mad!' And from 1916 onwards, for 20 years he spent his life in a psychiatric hospital.

"On April 24, 2003 when the Komitas statue in Paris was unveiled, I expressed hope that this memorial to the Armenian Genocide victims could symbolize memory of the victims of all genocides of the 20th century, that there would bow not only the descendants of those who suffered, but also the descendants of those who caused those sufferings. The route to reconciliation is not a path of denial, but that of conscious memory, because true reconciliation does not mean forgetting the past or feeding younger generations with the tales of denial. Turkey should reconcile with its own past to be able to build its future.

> "The President of Armenia has invited the Turkish President to visit Armenia on April 24, 2015, on the occasion of the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. We hope it will not be a missed opportunity and Turkey's President will be in Yerevan on that day."

In an op-ed article in the *Wall Street Journal*[2] published on 12 October 2010 and entitled "Turkey Has Gone Back on its Word", Mr. Nalbandian noted the following:

> "Last year on Oct. 10 in Zurich, after intensive negotiations, Armenia and Turkey reached agreement and the foreign ministers of the two countries signed the protocols on the establishment of diplomatic relations, opening of the border and development of bilateral relations.
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> "The Armenian-Turkish relations were in a deadlock when President Serzh Sargsyan initiated the normalization process with Turkey. We in Armenia were guided by a vision of a future in which generations would live in peace and safety. This Armenian initiative met a positive response by the Turkish President and allowed us to make a confident investment in a durable rapprochement.
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> "Our position was reflected in the well-known approach of normalization of relations without any preconditions. It was the bottom-line principle for starting the negotiations with Turkey. With this common understanding we started, conducted this process and came to the agreements. From the beginning of the process up until now this approach has been shared by the whole international community — starting from the Swiss mediators to the secretary-general of the U.N., the OSCE, the EU, the U.S., Russia, France and many other countries.
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> "Unfortunately Turkey has backtracked from the agreements. Not only has it refrained from ratifying the protocols, but Ankara has returned to the language of preconditions that it had used before the beginning of the process.
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> "It seems we speak in different languages. On the one hand, the Turkish leaders pretend that they always respect the principle of *pacta sunt servanda* (agreements must be kept), but on the other hand, they refrain from ratifying and implementing the agreements signed by themselves in Zurich. ... They claim they have no preconditions, that they simply demand that we fulfill this or that before they can proceed with the ratification. Does this mean they have no preconditions?
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> "Turkey has attempted to link the Armenian-Turkish normalization process to the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. They say that they do not want to act as mediators in the Nagorno-Karabakh peace talks, but just negotiate between Armenians and Azerbaijanis to find a solution. Any Turkish attempts to interfere in the Karabakh process or to link the normalization of its relations with Armenia upon its own perception of progress in the Nagorno-Karabakh talks, harms both processes. This is a position that all major players involved in Armenia-Turkey normalization and Nagorno-Karabakh peace talks, the whole international community have emphasized several times. The international community speaks one language and the Turkish side speaks another one.
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> "Turkey pretends that all problems in the region must have a 'comprehensive solution' once and for all. This is a beautiful phrase, but how realistic is it? It is a mere rhetoric, all words and no performance.
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> "Hypocritically Turkey also uses the normalization process as a smokescreen for baseless argument that the adoption of resolutions on the Armenian Genocide in

[2] Available at www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748703794104575545663167622050.

various countries can damage the normalization process. Yet, from the beginning of the process we made clear both in our contacts with the Turkish partners as well as publicly that Armenia will never put under question the fact of the Armenian Genocide or the importance of its international recognition.

"True reconciliation does not consist of forgetting the past or feeding younger generations tales of denial. Despite the fact that for 95 years Turkey has been continuously denying the Armenian Genocide, the Armenian side did not require its recognition by Turkey as a precondition for the normalization of the relations. Paradoxically it is Turkey that directly or indirectly has attempted to manipulate that issue, making it a precondition.

"Armenia initiated that process and spared no effort to see it succeed. When the Turkish side was pushing the whole process into a stalemate, Armenia was obliged to suspend its own ratification procedure, yet it remained in the normalization process, which was met with understanding and welcomed by world leaders.

"The negotiations between Armenia and Turkey were finalized by the signature of the protocols. There is neither 'silent diplomacy', nor 'a second season' of Zurich, nor any new round of negotiations, according to the information often spread by the Turkish media these days. The only remaining step in this long lasting process is the ratification and implementation of the Armenian-Turkish protocols without further ado. Armenia will be ready to move forward if Turkey is again ready to go ahead with the normalization process without preconditions.

"Today various world capitals recall that the ball is in the Turkish court, that Armenia has done its part and that Turkey should take the steps that it promised to take."

I kindly request that the present letter be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 8.

(*Signed*) Zohrab **Mnatsakanyan**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative